

# Pierce, running for governor, vows to work for Eastern Oregon

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — If he's elected governor, Bud Pierce says, he'll spend part of every year living east of the Cascades.

The 65-year-old Salem physician made that promise in front of 18 people who turned out to hear him speak at the Grant County Regional Airport on Wednesday, Jan. 12. Pierce flew in for the occasion in a private plane on loan from a campaign supporter, swooping in to John Day for a two-hour visit between stops in Ontario and Baker City.

"I think the governor of Oregon can best represent the people if he spends significant time with the people," Pierce said.

He also vowed to have three representatives from the east side of the state working in the governor's office as close advisers and said he would seek federal waivers to make it easier for loggers, miners, farmers and ranchers to operate.

"That's what I can promise you as governor," he said.

Pierce is one of the more prominent names in a crowded field of 15 announced candidates seeking the Republican nomination for governor in this year's primary election. He was the GOP nominee in the 2016 race, when he polled 44% of the vote to 51% for Democrat Kate Brown.

During his John Day stop-over, Pierce outlined the four main points of his campaign:

- **Public safety:** Police have to have the authority to do their jobs while also being accountable and transparent. Pierce promised to support law enforcement. "The basic promise is no matter where you are, you're going



Bud Pierce, left, a candidate for the GOP nomination for governor, speaks with Grant County Republican Chair Frances Preston on Wednesday, Jan. 12, at the Grant County Regional Airport in John Day.

to be safe and your property is going to be safe," he said.

- **Homelessness:** Pierce promised to "get rid of homelessness once and for all" by creating a system of shelters that would address addiction and mental health issues while preparing people for employment. "The goal is everybody has a job or something to do," he said.

- **Education:** Oregon should have a standardized curriculum, a non-political oversight board, a variety of learning structures and career path options, and a system where state education funding follows the student.

- **Economy:** Pierce supports lowering taxes and fees for businesses and reducing burdensome regulations.

Pierce made a number of other points in response to questions from the audience.

State agencies "need to be reformed dramatically," he

said, and given leaders "with a practical bent" who will work to help rather than hinder Oregonians.

On immigration, "we should make it as easy as possible to go across the border and still maintain border security," he said. "We probably need to have a lot more legal immigration (of workers with certain skill sets) to maintain our economy."

Pierce said Oregon needs strong public assistance programs, but he wants to raise the standard of living so people have less need of them.

"You want to create a society where work is much higher-valued than non-work," he said. "I'm for an adequate floor so people don't suffer, but it needs to be a floor, not a lifestyle."

Asked about his views on abortion, Pierce said his faith tells him that "God has a plan for that soul," but he stopped

short of advocating a ban. Instead, he said he favors providing support for pregnant women, families and children.

In response to a question about teaching "LGB-what-ever" in the classroom, Pierce said education should focus on academics and steer clear of teaching students about non-traditional forms of sexuality.

"We don't have time for that," he said. "It just doesn't belong."

Pierce answered a question about the campaign to move some Oregon counties to Idaho by saying, "I want to build an Oregon where Idahoans want to move to Oregon."

On taxes, Pierce said he would work to "broaden the base and lower the rate," possibly in part by collecting property taxes from nonprofits.

"It's about making sure that everybody who should pay pays."



FRIDAY, JAN. 21

**Ellis Tracey American Legion Auxiliary**  
• 2 p.m., Grant County Chamber of Commerce, 301 W. Main St., John Day  
The group will hold an in-person meeting. For more information, call 541-575-0076.

THURSDAY, JAN. 27

**Grant County Republican Central Committee**  
• 3-5 p.m., John Day Fire Hall, 316 S. Canyon Blvd.  
The purpose of the meeting is to elect a secretary, meet U.S. Senate candidate Ibra Taher at 3:30 p.m. and discuss candidate filing form SEL 105, due at the county courthouse by March 8. The public is welcome.

*Do you have a community event in Grant County you'd like to publicize? Email information to editor@bmeagle.com. The deadline is noon Friday for publication the following Wednesday.*



Philip Joseph Rodriguez, center, confers with members of his defense team in Grant County Circuit Court on Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2022.

## John Day man guilty in child rape case

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — A John Day man was convicted in Grant County Circuit Court on Thursday, Jan. 12, of committing sex crimes against a child.

Philip Joseph Rodriguez, 41, was found guilty of first-degree rape and first-degree sexual abuse, both Measure 11 offenses.

He was found not guilty of first-degree sodomy, and a charge of first-degree unlawful sexual penetration was dismissed early in the trial.

The crimes were committed between late January and early April of 2019, and the victim was a girl under the age of 12 who was known to Rodriguez.

The 12-person jury deliberated for a little over three hours before returning the verdict on Thursday afternoon, the ninth day of the trial.

Rodriguez was taken into custody and lodged at the Grant County Jail to await sentencing.

A sentencing hearing will be scheduled for a later date.

Under Measure 11, both the rape and sodomy convictions carry presumptive mandatory minimum sentences of eight years and four months in prison. Because of the victim's age at the time of the offenses, the judge could choose to impose mandatory minimums of 25 years under a statute known as Jessica's Law.

Malheur County Circuit Judge Lung S. Hung presided over the case.

Prosecuting attorneys Tobias Tingleaf of the Oregon Department of Justice and Riccola Voigt of the Grant County District Attorney's Office represented the state.

Rodriguez was represented by Kathleen Erin Dunn of Strawberry Mountain Law.

## City Council reopens comment on pool appeal

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The John Day City Council voted unanimously Tuesday, Jan. 11, to accept additional comment on an appeal of a conditional use permit for the proposed aquatic center at the Seventh Street Sports Complex.

The vote, which came at the request of the John Day-Canyon City Parks and Recreation District, reopened discussion of the appeal filed by John Morris. At a public hearing on Jan. 5, the council voted 3-2 to reject the appeal of the conditional use permit granted by the John Day Planning Commission.

At that hearing, Morris had requested that a decision be delayed to allow time for additional comment. Councilors Heather Rookstool and Elliot Sky argued in favor of that request but were overruled by Councilors Gregg Haberly, Dave Holland and Paul Smith, who voted to uphold the appeal.

The record in the appeal hearing has now been reopened for additional written testimony. People who participated in the Jan. 5 City Council hearing, the Dec. 8 Planning Commission hearing on the conditional use permit



Courtesy of Opsis Architecture  
**If funding for the project is approved by voters, the aquatic center would be built in the northwest corner of the Seventh Street Sports Complex.**

or an Aug. 11 neighborhood meeting on the aquatic center project will be eligible to submit additional comments or evidence regarding the conditional use permit.

The deadline to submit testimony is 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 19. Written comments can be emailed to cityofjohnday@grantcounty-or.gov or delivered to City Hall, 450 E. Main St., during business hours.

The City Council will review the additional testimony and resume deliberation on Morris' appeal at its next meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 25.

In his appeal, Morris

argued that the Planning Commission was biased and prejudicial in its decision to grant the permit because he was not given "the same opportunity to provide and to complete his testimony" as those who spoke in favor of the pool project. He expanded on his objections in 15 pages of written testimony.

The proposed aquatic center would replace the old Gleason Pool, located in a city park adjacent to the Kam Wah Chung State Historic Site. That pool, which opened in 1958, has been closed the last two seasons.

The City Council recently approved the sale of Gleason Park, where the pool is located, to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. The state is planning a \$4.5 million expansion of the Kam Wah Chung Historic Site on the park property.

Plans for the new aquatic center call for a six-lane, 25-yard competitive pool with spectator seating and an 8,000-square-foot structure to house locker rooms, a lobby, and office space for parks and recreation staff.

The project has an estimated price tag of \$6 million, but the city has already obtained \$2 million in state funding and is considering up to \$1 million more in cash and

in-kind contributions for site improvements, including the money from the sale of the Gleason Park property. The city also plans to cover utility costs for the new pool.

The parks and rec district still needs to raise \$3 million to \$4 million to cover design and construction of the aquatic center. The district plans to put a bond measure on the ballot this year for either the May or the November election.

If voters in the John Day and Canyon City area (the area covered by the district) approve the bond measure, the new aquatic center could open as soon as the summer of 2023.

**THE JUNIPER ARTS COUNCIL / GRANT COUNTY CULTURAL COALITION IS SEEKING GRANT PROPOSALS FOR OREGON CULTURAL TRUST GRANT AWARDS**

**The coalition has \$12,000 from the Oregon Cultural Trust to distribute in Grant County to organizations for projects relating to culture and / or heritage.**

**Applications are available from Karin Barntish, 131 W. Main Street, John Day, Oregon, or call Kris Beal at (541)932-4892 for more information or an application.**

**Applications are due by 5:00pm on Wednesday February 2, 2022.**

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